

Testimony of Women and Families Center
**In Support of SB 1033 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LIMITATIONS OF TIME TO
BRING A CIVIL ACTION FOR DAMAGES CAUSED BY SEXUAL ABUSE, SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION OR SEXUAL ASSAULT SUFFERED BY A PERSON PRIOR TO
ATTAINING AGE OF MAJORITY**

Kristen Granatek, Director of Prevention and Intervention Services, Women & Families Center
Judiciary Committee, April 4, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Kristen Granatek and I am the Director of Prevention and Intervention Services for Women & Families Center Sexual Assault Crisis Services, a member agency of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is a statewide coalition of individual rape crisis programs which are dedicated to ending sexual violence through victim assistance, community education and public advocacy. WFC SACS provides these services in a 28 town service area that includes Meriden, Wallingford, Greater New Haven and Middlesex County. We ask that you join with us to support SB 1033: An Act Concerning the Limitations of Time to Bring a Civil Action for Damages Caused by Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Assault Suffered By a Person Prior to Attaining Age of Majority.

Survivors of child sexual abuse face a multitude of obstacles in reporting the crime and moving forward in their recovery. Statistics show that over 90% of young victims know their abusers. Most often, the abuser is the child's family member, legal guardian, or friend – a person that the child trusts and is who is in a position of power over the child. Perpetrators of child sexual abuse often groom, manipulate and coerce children to believe that the abuse is their own fault and that they will get in trouble if they disclose. Survivors then carry this burden throughout their lives. Victims of child sexual abuse face numerous barriers to disclosing their abuse when it happens, such as fear of their abuser, fear that they will not be believed, fear of being taken away from their family, thinking the abuse was their fault, not being able to identify that what happened to them as abuse and a desire to put the abuse behind them. While reporting rates for sexual assault are estimated to be between 18 and 30%, the reporting rate for child sexual abuse is even lower, due to the obstacles faced by survivors in acknowledging and reporting what happened to them. It is not uncommon for survivors to disclose their abuse years and even decades after it occurred.

In my work as Director of SACS, I see the impact of child sexual abuse throughout the life survivors. I see the difficulty they experience in talking about their abuse and in pursuing justice. I think of an adult survivor of child sexual abuse with whom I worked. When she contacted me, she told me that a family member had sexually abused her when she was a child. Until the day she contacted me, she had told no one, though the abuse had occurred more than 30 years ago. The first person she told was a family member. Her family member told her that she too, had been abused by this person. She was urged her to call SACS for support. The survivor told me that she finally wanted to talk about her abuse because her own daughter was approaching the age that she was when she was first abused. This had triggered thoughts and feelings in her in way she did not expect; she knew she needed help more than at any point in her life. This was one reason for her call. The other: seeking justice for what had happened to her

and protecting others from being victimized by the person that had abused her and her family member – including her own daughter.

The current statute of limitations allows survivors until the age of 48 to pursue justice. This process involves detailing the abuse that occurred, answering questions about what happened and sometimes confronting the perpetrator. Some survivors simply are not ready or able to disclose to anyone by the time the current statute of limitations expires, much less begin the often painful and difficult process of moving forward through the civil justice system.

The story of the survivor I worked with is one of countless examples I have seen of why the civil statute of limitations for child sexual abuse must be repealed. It took her decades to tell anyone about the abuse she experienced. She was at the beginning of what was to be a long and complex healing process. Who's to say when she would be ready to pursue legal action?

Justice should not have an expiration date. I urge you to join us in supporting SB 1033 and the repeal of the civil statute of limitations for child sexual abuse.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Kristen Granatek, Director, Prevention and Intervention Services

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